

SHINING GIRLS

by  
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Based on the novel - THE SHINING GIRLS by Lauren Beukes

Appian Way / MRC

**OVER BLACK:** A WHISPER ECHOES through darkness. The voice MUFFLED, as if it's traveling down a gangling tunnel...

GIRL (PRE-LAP)  
Shut up in there or I won't let  
you out --

**EXT. PARK NEIGHBORHOOD (CHICAGO) - NIGHT**

A GIRL (7) cross-legged on the stoop of a dingy ROWHOUSE. The neighborhood in transition, some homes boarded-up, others fresh with paint.

**TITLE CARD: 1974**

The Girl plays make-believe with a heap of collected JUNK (dented bike spoke, bottle tops, yarn).

She leans close to an overturned TEACUP, hisses to whatever she's trapped underneath it --

GIRL  
I said shhhh.

She snaps up, hears the SCRAPE of shoes against concrete--

A STRANGER (M, late 20s) in a field jacket LIMPS down the road. Maybe a Vietnam vet, his stubble grown out, his features boyish.

The Stranger slows, rubs his bum knee.

STRANGER  
(re: her stoop)  
You mind?

Shy, the Girl shrugs, keeps focused on her teacup. He settles a few stairs below her, stretches out.

STRANGER (CONT'D)  
(re: his knee)  
It locks up after it rains.

GIRL  
(soft)  
... It didn't rain.

STRANGER  
What'd you say?

He hops up a stair, closer to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL

It didn't rain.

STRANGER

Not here, not yet.

He scans her trash pile, recognizing it for what it is --

STRANGER (CONT'D)

(re: trash)

You make yourself a Big Top?

She nods, still timid. But he keeps his focus steady, his tone thoughtful, not usually how adults talk to her.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

So what's what?

(re: bike wheel)

Ferris wheel?

(re: yarn)

Tight rope?

The Girl scissors her fingers across the yarn like a tightrope walker.

GIRL

It's for Ringmaster Ned.

STRANGER

Ringmaster who?

The Girl mumbles the Bozo the Clown Theme Song --

GIRL

This circus is my home / I always  
seem to roam --

GIRL & STRANGER (SING TOGETHER)

But you must know, I'll never go /  
Unless you come along.

The Girl beams, surprised he knows the song. The Stranger edges closer to the OVERTURNED TEACUP, taps it...

THUNK THUNK. Whatever's trapped underneath sparks awake.

STRANGER

This must be old Ned's... tiger?

GIRL

Lion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

STRANGER

He's got a heavy purr. Ringmaster  
Ned teach you how to tame him?  
(she shakes her head)  
Well then, he's a pretty shitty  
ringmaster.

The Girl smirks at the curse word. The Stranger inches for the teacup set between her grass-stained knees.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

You want me to tame him for you?

She straightens, realizing that he's blocked her in. Suddenly nervous, she keeps still, eyes locked on him.

He shifts his body closer... and leans between her knees to press his ear against the teacup...

Her breath catches, locks of his greasy hair brushing against her calf.

He listens, hears from under the teacup -- the angry BUZZING of a BEE.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

(re: Bee under teacup)  
He's a curious one, wants out.

He eases up, face to face with her now. Surveys the Girl-- her eyes sharp, jaw set.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Hard to keep that kind down.

His gaze never leaves her, he dives a hand into his jacket.

Frozen, she scans the block for help -- the street is empty, quiet.

The Stranger finally whips his hand out of his jacket... She flinches as he sets down -- a WINGED PONY FIGURINE.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Maybe try a more pliable beast.

The Girl realizes it's a toy, relaxes.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

(re: toy Pony)  
A filly won't draw the crowds, but she's easier to break in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GIRL

I can't take that.

STRANGER

Why not?

GIRL

I can't take presents from people  
I don't know.

STRANGER

So let's call it a deposit. You  
hold it for me until I come back.

GIRL

I don't want it.

Confident, he goes to leave --

STRANGER

You'll take it, you always do.

He stops short. Remembers the teacup --

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Your lion. We can't just leave it  
wild.

He eases up the teacup -- the BEE shoots out and he  
snatches it into his fist.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

First we gotta find its shine...  
Then we take it away --

In one swift jerk, he rips the bee's wings off with a  
dull POP. He dumps the WINGLESS BEE on the stoop.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Now it's ours forever.

Horrified, the Girl sinks back. The Bee's limbless  
carcass warbles at her feet.

She watches the Stranger amble away, hops up, scrambles  
for the FRONT DOOR. But just as her key hits the latch...

She doubles back, swipes the PONY before rushing inside.

He was right. She takes it every time.

**INT. APARTMENT (CHICAGO) - BEDROOM - MORNING**

A tabby CAT meanders past bootleg LP's scattered across the floor, past MOVING BOXES. It pauses to sniff a CEREAL BOWL, CIGARETTE BUTTS floating in the stale milk.

The Cat continues towards a bed raised on cinder blocks. It pounces up, lands at the feet of --

**KIRBY MAZRACHI** (late 20s) scribbling away in a NOTEBOOK. Still in her PJs - a ratty t-shirt and underwear.

She's too old to be living like this. Stunted, withdrawn. A woman trying to bridge the gulf between who she is and who she was supposed to be. But falling short daily.

Kirby adds a fresh page of notes, MUMBLES along --

*I am Kirby Mazrachi.*

*I live at 2032 W. Pierce Avenue.*

*My apartment is on the 3rd floor, 2nd door on the left.*

*I live with Rachel.*

*I take the M20 bus to Madison and Racine.*

*I work at the Chicago Sun Times.*

*My desk is by the SE window. The one with a Godzilla mug.*

She continues to list BIOGRAPHICAL STATS. We're not sure what she's doing...

But for Kirby this is an essential part of every morning. Her focus intense, her writing frenzied. She has to get this down as fast as she can.

Kirby rubs the Cat's belly, checks its HEART-SHAPED ID TAG (remember this detail later), adds to her notebook:

*Grendel is my cat.*

She scans her gloomy bedroom, thinks for a beat. Sets down the pen. That's all for today.

**TITLE CARD: 1992**

**INT. APARTMENT (CHICAGO) - MAIN ROOM - EARLY MORNING**

Kirby, backpack slung over her shoulder, slips into a communal space - living room and kitchenette all in one.

A local NEWSCAST on TV. The HOSTS report in crisis mode in front of FLOODED SKYSCRAPERS. Aerials of blocks abandoned to water damage. Not that it matters to --

**RACHEL LEEDS** (40s), a former 70s Riot Girl, bad dye job, cheap tattoos. Still buzzed from last night, sucks on a Marlboro as she packs kitchenware into a cardboard box.

Kirby watches Rachel box up glasses, mugs, a rice cooker. She rolls her eyes, knows a fight's coming...

KIRBY

You just get in?

Rachel ignores her. Kirby steps past her, sniffs the coffee pot, pours herself a cup.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

How'd the audition go?

RACHEL

Another fucking ska band pretending to be thrash.

Rachel clatters mugs into the box, making a show of it. Kirby gives in, motions to the box of kitchenware --

KIRBY

What're you doing with those?

RACHEL

(re: kitchenware)

You can take these with you to Orlando.

(motions to cabinet)

But the plates are mine, your gran left them to me. They're all yours when I die, if you make the trip back for my funeral.

KIRBY

(sets down money)

Cool. Buy some cat food on your way home.

Kirby cranks up her Walkman, HOUSE MUSIC blasts from her headphones --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Bye, Mom.

Rachel mouths a frustrated retort, but all Kirby hears is a POUNDING SLOW-BASS as it carries us to --

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - BULLPEN - DAY**

A working man's paper. Cramped, noisy. An institution that promises prestige, but the reporters are on their own for everything else.

Kirby, the floor runner (ie Newsroom grunt), snakes between desks to deliver LUNCH ORDERS. She keeps her headphones on to discourage people from talking to her.

As she makes her drops, an ASSISTANT gets her attention --

ASSISTANT

(mouths)

Ketchup?

Kirby fishes in the takeout bag, hands over some packets. She finishes up her rounds, finally gets to --

Her own DESK, by the SE window. A GODZILLA MUG catches drops of dirty water from a leaky AC UNIT.

She slips off her headphones, unwraps her own sandwich --

FLOOR MANAGER (O.S.)

Who's taking walk-ins?

Kirby looks up -- the FLOOR MANAGER grumbles over.

NEARBY FLOATERS and ASSISTANTS focus on their lunches, on their computer screens. Anything to look busy.

FLOOR MANAGER (CONT'D)

Come on, they're stacking up.

His gaze lands on Kirby.

FLOOR MANAGER (CONT'D)

Your last day's not til Friday,  
you're up.

Resigned, she sets down her sandwich.

**CUT TO:**

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

By the elevator banks, WALK-INS wait their turn to give feedback on the paper. They've brought tupperware lunches, knitting and the will to wait all day.

We TRACK to the front of the line -- at a folding table, Kirby gets shouted down by a WALK-IN (F, 40s).

WALK-IN

-- He gets dumped by the Mariners so we give him the reins to Wrigley? He won the Series in what, '65, that doesn't mean he can manage a team. You don't let the chickens run the farm.

(re: Kirby's notepad)

Write that down, it's a quote.

KIRBY

Which part?

WALK-IN

All of it, what I just said.

Kirby sighs, motions to her EMPTY LEGAL PAD --

KIRBY

Ma'am, when we're done here, this goes into a drawer. Nobody reads it, nobody files it, it just sits there. So if you came here to bitch, I'll listen. But please don't make me write it down.

WALK-IN

Is there anyone else I can talk to?

KIRBY

I'm it, the bottom rung.

WALK-IN

(thinks on it, then)

... You need me to say it again?

Kirby deflates, jots down what she can remember.

As she writes, the babble of RUSHING WATER plays over her frustration, the churning grows louder and louder until --

**EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO STREETS ('THE LOOP') - DAY**

A BURST of GUSHING WATER jets out the ground floor of a SKYSCRAPER. We pull back to reveal --

Fetid water rolling past skyscrapers. The COMMERCIAL HUB shut down by a municipal FLOOD. FIREMEN work hoses that PUMP WATER out of the buildings, into a --

DESOLATE INTERSECTION.

No foot traffic. No electricity. The businesses closed, the street lights dark.

Behind a police barricade, chirpy LOCAL TV REPORTERS deliver on-the-ground reporting. We track down the line --

REPORTER	REPORTER 2
Workers showed up this morning to find anything but business as usual --	-- weeks, if not months of clean up. Mayor Daley expects damages nearing the billion dollar mark...

We track past them to find --

DAN VELAZQUEZ (40s, Dominican) slacks rolled up to his knees, a pair of old Reeboks in hand, he trudges through the brackish water. A lone figure wading through the flood to cross the deserted intersection.

TRAFFIC COP (O.S.)  
BUDDY, YOU'RE GONNA GET TETANUS,  
GET OUTTA THERE.

Dan ignores him, determined to reach the CHICAGO RIVER'S EMBANKMENT. An addict that's survived years of see-sawing recovery. Both folksy and intellectual. A bar stool hero.

He reaches the embankment, peers down to the shore --

UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS stand guard at a SEWAGE CULVERT. POLICE TAPE blocks the opening.

CUT TO:

By the culvert, **DETECTIVE SAMUELS** (committed to the path of least resistance) wraps PLASTIC BAGS over his loafers.

Samuels glances over to find Dan's wet feet beside him.

SAMUELS  
Not now, you need to keep moving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Samuels digs out some CHANGE, flicks it towards Dan.

DAN  
(ignores the change)  
Dan Velazquez, I'm with the Times.

Samuels straightens, takes stock of Dan.

DAN (CONT'D)  
(motions to culvert)  
What's up?

SAMUELS  
We're trying to patch up the leak  
through the sewer lines.

DAN  
(calls bullshit)  
No hardhats? DOT's upstairs, and  
you got half the 19th down here.

SAMUELS  
City called a state of emergency.  
It's all hands on deck.

Dan points to the embankment wall. The tide line etched  
into the brick facade.

DAN  
The tide dropped ten feet last  
night. That pipe's clear for the  
first time in fifty years. Who'd  
you find in there?

SAMUELS  
Yeah, fine, some homeless guy made  
a home in the wrong hole.

DAN  
(not buying it)  
Loaders at the Merch Mart say  
you've been here since dawn. Who  
is it?

Samuels finishes tying the plastic bags over his shoes.

SAMUELS  
When we have something, we'll let  
you know.

DAN  
I'd appreciate that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dan digs out a BUSINESS CARD, hands it over. Samuels pushes past Dan and ducks under the police tape.

He disappears down the CULVERT. The cavernous pipe is decades old. Its metal rusting off in flakes. Samuels' bagged loafers slush away through the sewage.

Dan crouches down, scoops up the loose change. His eyes down the barrel of the culvert --

FLASHLIGHTS flicker in the distance. The minatory echo of SHOUTS and BOOTSTEPS. Condensation sweats off the piping and drips down... PLINK -- PLINK -- PLINK --

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - BULLPEN - DAY**

PLINK -- PLINK -- PLINK -- the leaky WINDOW AC UNIT drips but into a different mug than earlier. Kirby's Godzilla mug is now a CHICAGO BULLS MUG. We widen to reveal --

Kirby staring at the mug, puzzled by --

A MAN (20s) sits in her chair, types away at her keyboard. That's his Bulls mug.

This is the same desk we saw Kirby at earlier, but now there's a stranger sitting in it. Kirby lurks...

MAN

(keeps typing)  
What's up?

KIRBY

... Why are you on my computer?

MAN

(annoyed)  
What? I have to get this in by four.

KIRBY

(still confused)  
Is your computer not working?

The Man finally stops typing, swivels to face her.

MAN

This is my computer.

KIRBY

Since when?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A few heads turn their direction.

MAN

Since always. You serious?  
(points across room)  
You're over there, Kirby.

She tries to understand, follows his gaze to --

An EMPTY DESK with HER PERSONAL EFFECTS on it. Her GODZILLA MUG on it, now filled with pens.

The Man's frustration turns to concern --

MAN

You okay?

KIRBY

(bewildered)  
... Yeah, sorry.

In a daze, Kirby edges towards the empty desk. She flips through the calendar, checks the drawers...

Her desk seems to have moved across the room.

Disoriented, she looks back at the Man. *Is he messing with her?* But he's already back to typing.

A quiet panic rises in her. We get the sense that this isn't the first time something like this has happened. Which only makes it scarier.

The sound of the room drops out as she takes a few controlled breaths, in and out, until she's interrupted --

FLOOR MANAGER

Some guy called for you.  
(reads from slip)  
'Edmond Diggs'.

Kirby tightens at the name, stammers --

KIRBY

... Okay, thanks.

FLOOR MANAGER

He called like five times. Tell your friends they can't tie up the main line.

Kirby covers, keeps her breaths steady, her gaze down. But she can feel the nosy stares of nearby Assistants.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Rattled, she grabs her backpack, bolts to the bathroom.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY**

Dan sits across from ABBY KEEGAN (50s, the Editor and office den mother. Dan's oldest friend).

He waits as Abby scans through his notes... then sets them aside.

ABBY

(gentle)

We'll put resources on it.

DAN

I'm already on it.

ABBY

Slow down, finish one story before you start another.

DAN

Ben and Lakshmi have the flood covered. They don't need me.

ABBY

We agreed you'd come back for some small pieces. Hit your deadlines, and we'll go from there.

Before Dan can argue further, **BERTIE WOLSKI** (M, 30s, reporter) pops his head in --

BERTIE

(to Dan)

Ronnie Samuels from the 19th says you were running hot with him.

DAN

I don't know who that is.

BERTIE

Police source, a reliable one.

ABBY

(to Bertie)

Did he mention anything about the tunnels off Lasalle?

BERTIE

... No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bertie, now suddenly interested, steps in. Abby looks to Dan, motions for him to get on with it --

ABBY  
(to Dan, re: Bertie)  
It's his beat.

Dan sighs, doesn't like sharing...

DAN  
I talked to the ME. City workers  
found a body in a pipe off the  
Loop. A young woman, Julia  
Madrigal.

BERTIE  
Is she listed?

DAN  
Her Dad is, he's over in Lakeview.

BERTIE  
He take your call?

DAN  
(nods)  
She went missing three years ago.

BERTIE  
Any history of mental illness?  
Could've jumped off the Wabash,  
current landed her in the tunnels.

DAN  
The ME said she was in pieces.

That gets Bertie's attention.

BERTIE  
... I'm polishing up the shooting  
on 14th. I can run the legwork.

DAN  
I'm good.

ABBY  
Bertie's been filling in for you,  
he's made inroads with the 19th.  
They like him over there.

DAN  
People like me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Abby deliberates.

DAN (CONT'D)  
 Either I'm back or I'm not.

ABBY  
 ... The SDR's coming out,  
 homicides doubled last year. PD  
 needs a win. Build some goodwill  
 if you can.

Dan nods his thanks, gathers his notes and leaves.

Bertie waits for Dan to be out of earshot, about to argue  
 again for the story --

ABBY (CONT'D)  
 Let him have it.

Point made. Bertie scuttles away.

Abby stares across the bullpen -- Dan works the phones,  
 cross-checks notes. In his element.

His excitement only makes Abby more nervous.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - WOMAN'S BATHROOM - DAY**

The stall LOCK flips shut. Kirby leans against the door,  
 sets her BACKPACK on the toilet tank.

She moves through a routine -- ties up her hair, wipes  
 off her lipstick with toilet paper, removes her earrings.

From her backpack, she grabs a TANTO POINT FOLDING KNIFE,  
 tucks it into her jacket pocket, grips her KEYS in the  
 other pocket - her security blankets.

She takes a deep breath, slides open the lock --

**INT. 9TH DISTRICT PRECINCT - LOBBY - NIGHT**

The chaos of a precinct at the height of the Southside  
 Gang Wars. Long processing lines, K-9s sniff the crowd,  
 and the steady chirp of a metal detector.

Kirby, on edge, wills herself through the crowd, steps up  
 to the check-in counter. The DESK SERGEANT (M, 20s)  
 barely notices her --

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

DESK SERGEANT

If you're filing an incident, sign the sheet, an officer will call your name. If you're looking for someone in processing, head down to the County Clerk's office.

KIRBY

I'm here to see Detective Diggs.

The Desk Sergeant finally looks at her.

DESK SERGEANT

He expecting you?

KIRBY

Yeah, he called me in. I'm... I'm Sharon Leeds.

DESK SERGEANT

Wait here, Ms. Leeds.

The Desk Sergeant disappears into the back.

CONVICT

(to Desk Sergeant)

Yo, I need the bathroom. YO --

Kirby stiffens as a CONVICT (M, 30s), hands cuffed, glassy-eyed, stumbles up to the counter next to her.

CONVICT

(to Kirby)

You got a smoke?

Kirby turns away, doesn't dare look at him. The Desk Sergeant reappears, motions to a door and buzzes her in --

DESK SERGEANT

(to Kirby)

Go on back.

Kirby tries to move past the Convict. But he blocks her path, smiles. Thinks he's being cute.

CONVICT

You hear me? You smoke pole?

Kirby's hand inches into her jacket pocket...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DESK SERGEANT

(to Convict)

You wanna add charges to your sheet? Fucking move.

The Convict steps aside, lets Kirby edge past him. As she passes, he skims his thumb up the nape of her neck. She flinches, hustles forward.

**MAIN FLOOR**

A well-oiled bullpen. Seasoned DETECTIVES and SUPPORT STAFF work phones, type on outdated PCs.

We find Kirby sitting at a desk with **DETECTIVE EDMOND DIGGS** (50s). Paternal to the point of condescension. He eyes her DRIVER'S LICENSE, amused.

DIGGS

Where'd you come up with 'Mazrachi?'

KIRBY

National Geographic, he's some photographer.

DIGGS

And 'Kirby'?

KIRBY

I don't know... seemed fun.

DIGGS

Has it been?

(off her look)

You seem... healthy. It's important to regain a sense of control. A new name, new look, those are good steps towards that.

His patronizing tone sets her off --

KIRBY

You can't call me at work.

DIGGS

Rachel wouldn't pick up my calls.

KIRBY

After six years? No, she probably wouldn't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Diggs shrugs, point taken. Kirby can't hold back anymore--

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Did you find him?

DIGGS

We found the body of a woman,  
Julia Madrigal. You know her?

Kirby turns the name over, doesn't recognize it.

DIGGS (CONT'D)

There were similarities between  
your assault and Julia's murder.

Kirby tightens, her bravado falters.

KIRBY

What kind?

DIGGS

I can't discuss specifics, it  
could jeopardize a conviction. But  
we have a suspect in Julia's  
murder.

Diggs pulls out a binder, sets it in front of her.  
Kirby's voice grows quiet, shaky --

KIRBY

(re: binder)

His picture's in here?

DIGGS

I can't tell you which one, you  
need to pick him out.

She sits back, processing...

KIRBY

You're sure it's him?

DIGGS

6 years, I've never asked you down  
here before... Please...

Diggs pushes the binder forward. Kirby braces herself --  
flips through PHOTO after PHOTO of MEN (20's to 40s).

DIGGS (CONT'D)

Take your time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KIRBY

...I don't know.

DIGGS

You don't know what you know until  
it's looking right at you.

Kirby scrolls through the photos. Page after page, their  
faces mean nothing to her. She grows frustrated.

KIRBY

What's the suspect's name?

DIGGS

I can't tell you, just look in  
there, see if something clicks.

KIRBY

If I knew what he looked like, I  
would've told you then.

Diggs pulls 3 PHOTOS from the book, guides her --

DIGGS

What about these?

MUGSHOTS of THREE similar-looking YOUNG MEN. She stares  
at them... tries to place them...

DIGGS (CONT'D)

Come on, really look --

KIRBY

(erupts)

I don't know, I don't know what he  
looks like. I go to the  
supermarket, he could be the guy  
bagging my milk, or maybe its the  
creep behind me in line, or the  
asshole holding open the door.  
He's everybody, he's nobody, he's  
all the fucking time.

Kirby shuts the binder. Diggs waits for her to settle.

DIGGS

... Can you remember anything?

KIRBY

Yeah, his voice when he called me  
a cunt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Kirby's up out of her seat, striding out. Diggs thinks about calling after her, but decides against it.

He looks across the bullpen, catches eyes with Detective Samuels (from earlier). He gives Samuels a nod.

Samuels picks up his phone, digs out a BUSINESS CARD...

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - BULLPEN - NIGHT**

Dan, frustrated, sits back at his desk, his notes cast aside. It's obvious he's reached a dead-end.

A huddle of REPORTERS head out for the night. A few brown-bagging beers. Dan eyes them, debating...

Suddenly, his phone RINGS. Dan snaps back, sits up, answers the phone --

DAN (INTO PHONE)  
Dan Velazquez, Chicago Sun Times.

**EXT. STREET (WICKER PARK) - NIGHT**

A former industrial park that's been co-opted by artists.

We find Kirby moving at a clip, eyes always darting. She slips her KEYS out of her pocket, makes her way up the stairs of her APARTMENT BUILDING.

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Kirby tugs off her jeans, reaches for her ratty PJs. She freezes, hears --

The rustling of KEYS off in the living room. The sounds of kissing, laughing. Her mom coming home with someone.

RACHEL (O.S.)  
Kirby, you here?  
(whispers)  
She works late.

Kirby stays frozen, silent.

MAN (O.S.)  
Where's your room?

Kirby hears the second bedroom door close. The apartment falls quiet again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She steps away from the door, slips off her shirt --

A gnarly SCAR stretches from her collar to her navel. The wound is years old, but the keloid still looks swollen, raw. It's etched in the shape of an INVERTED CROSS.

**EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE (ENGLEWOOD) - NIGHT**

Deep across town. Corner Boys huddle outside clapboard row-houses. Music bumping from cars. Distant sirens.

As we track past them, the street grows more desolate. We continue past vacant lots, past boarded-up tract houses. Until we land on --

A VICTORIAN HOUSE. It's been on this block since the turn of the century. Abandoned long ago, boarded up with rotting plywood.

Suddenly, a LIGHT turns on inside the house...

A shadow passes behind the plywood covering a window. The wood CREAKS, something pounding on the plywood --

BAM -- BAM -- BAM --

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

-- BAM -- BAM -- BAM. Kirby bolts up, staring at --

Her bedroom door. Something thumping on the other side. She tenses, tiptoes up to the door, eases it open --

A scruffy PIT BULL trots in. Kirby darts back, nervous. But the dog nuzzles her feet, seems to know her.

Unsure, she checks its HEART-SHAPED ID TAG -- *Grendel*.

The ID TAG is the same as her cat's (from earlier). Her cat is now a dog.

Shaken, Kirby stares at the dog, who BAAAAARKS --

**EXT. ABANDONED HOUSE (ENGLEWOOD) - NIGHT**

-- A final CRAAAAACK. The plywood BURSTS OFF the window. The shadow of a MAN emerges from inside the house.

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Kirby flips open her NOTEBOOK, scratches out a line --

~~Grendel is my cat.~~

She jots down a new line --

*Grendel is my dog.*

Kirby clutches the Pitbull curled in her lap. Her eyes linger on her OPEN WINDOW, the curtains fluttering.

The breeze feels electric... different. She clicks off the bedside lamp sending us to --

**BLACK.**

**EXT. ADLER PLANETARIUM - DAY**

We're TIGHT on multi-colored PIXELS that slowly separate... as we PULL BACK to realize we're watching --

A swarm of colorful UMBRELLAS moving through the rain. We follow a RED UMBRELLA as it disappears inside --

The CUPOLA of the ALDER PLANETARIUM - a 1930s relic, the rough-hewn stone facade looks even older, almost pagan. But we're still in 1992.

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - MAIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

The RED UMBRELLA lowers, revealing --

**JIN-SOOK GWANSUN** (Korean, 20s). Effervescent with nerves. A yearling running her first race. She flashes her ID to the SECURITY GUARD --

JIN-SOOK

Morning, Sheila.

SECURITY GUARD

(waves her through)

You're good.

Jin-Sook skirts past the TICKET BOOTH, cuts across the mobbed CENTRAL ATRIUM, heads up the PERSONNEL STAIRS.

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - RESEARCH AREA - DAY**

Jin-Sook slips into an under-funded ASTRONOMY LABORATORY - computer workstations, telescope monitors, etc.

She shakes out her umbrella, listens as --

**DR. ADAM HARTMANN** (60s, old guard, erudite), a post-doc fellow, lectures bewildered ELEMENTARY STUDENTS --

HARTMANN

-- gravity creates attractions.  
So, in our infinitely large universe, one element attracts another, they merge, then you have something altogether new.

The Students stare back, bored. One GIRL chews her hair. Their Teacher cuts in with her sing-songy voice --

TEACHER

Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge. Come on guys, find your buddy, we're going up to the roof to see the telescopes.

The Kids pair off, stampede out. Jin Sook rushes to tidy up the mess left in their wake.

JIN-SOOK

I'm so sorry I'm late, the El's still backed up from the flood.

HARTMANN

(re: kids)

I managed. They're feral in groups. But if you bore them enough, they move on.

JIN-SOOK

Last night's data set came in from New Mexico. I'll pull it up...

She trails off, spotting something under a desk. She reaches down, picks up --

A **WINGED PONY FIGURINE** (the same PONY the Stranger gave the Girl in the opening). Some Kid left it behind.

HARTMANN (O.S.)

He carried lighting and thunder.

Jin-Sook turns to find Hartmann at her side. He motions --

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

HARTMANN  
 (re: Winged Pony)  
 Pegasus.

She starts for the door to run after the Kids --

HARTMANN  
 Drop it in the lost and found  
 later. Let's get started on the  
 New Mexico set.

JIN-SOOK  
 Of course.

Jin-Sook  dumps the PEGASUS into her purse, moves on.

**INT. KOKI LOUNGE - DAY**

A grubby Puerto Rican bar. Blacked out windows, electro-merengue blaring from cheap speakers.

Detective Samuels (from Culvert) perched on a stool. He nurses his beer, deeply out of place.

DAN (O.S.)  
 Sorry, I got caught on a call.

Samuels turns to find Dan sidling up to the bar.

SAMUELS  
 (re: Bar)  
 I'm a cop, next time pick  
 somewhere Irish and sad.

DAN  
 (shrugs)  
 My office is up the block.

The Bartender clocks Dan, starts to pour a whiskey --

BARTENDER (IN SPANISH)  
*How you been, Dan --*

DAN (IN SPANISH)  
*Just a coke today.*

The Bartender nods, gets it.

SAMUELS  
 I heard you talked to the ME.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Iris is always my first call.

Dan pulls out his notebook, pen ready --

DAN (CONT'D)

Blow me away, who's your suspect?

SAMUELS

Pawel Banik. The victim was a social worker, he was one of her cases. We had him in three years ago when Julia first went missing, got a confession.

DAN

You didn't charge him?

Suspicious, he eyes Samuels who shrugs.

DAN (CONT'D)

What kind of social work Julia do?

SAMUELS

1096s mostly.

Dan sets down his pen, understands.

DAN

Did the suspect have a lawyer present?

SAMUELS

... Not at the time, no.

DAN

So you railroaded this mentally ill man, violated his 6th amendment and now you want me to say he murdered someone.

Samuels studies Dan... motions to his Coca Cola.

SAMUELS

You working the steps?

DAN

(caught off guard)  
3 months in.

SAMUELS

(taps his beer)  
For this or something else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN  
... Something else.

SAMUELS  
That makes sense. My wife used to read you on Sundays. She thought you retired.

DAN  
I'm still here.

SAMUELS  
If you say so. But you weren't my only call, you were my last.

DAN  
I won't sell a case you couldn't make three years ago.

SAMUELS  
I was there when they brought him in. Nobody took a phone book to the guy. We just didn't have a body.

Dan thinks on it, knows he needs this.

DAN  
... Let me get my quotes. I'll file it.

Samuels stands, scans the bar. Not a good place to be in recovery.

SAMUELS  
The McDonalds on 14th is close enough. Buy me a burger next time.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - RESEARCH DEPARTMENT - NIGHT**

The bowels of the building. The walls vibrate from the churn of the nearby PRINTING PRESS.

Kirby, headphones on, waits at the DESK COUNTER. Behind the counter, STACKS and MICROFICHE READERS.

A HAND creeps up to Kirby's ear, tugs her headphones off. She startles as --

**CURTIS OWENS** (Black, 20s) fresh out of University of Chicago, an easy confidence, sidles up to her, smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURTIS

Kirby? You hear what I said?

She shakes her head, not good with men her own age.

KIRBY

What was it?

CURTIS

(shrugs, playful)

It'll be a mystery for the ages.  
What's up?

KIRBY

Nothing. Why?

CURTIS

You're standing at my desk.

KIRBY

Right. I'm looking for background  
on a woman, Julia Madrigal, I only  
know --

Curtis slides around to the other side of the counter.

CURTIS

Ms. Madrigal's popular today. You  
with Dan? He pulled everything we  
had on her.

He motions to -- Dan, head bowed, at a MICROFICHE READER.

KIRBY

I'll come back later.

But Curtis is already shouting back --

CURTIS

Hey Dan, your runner's here.

Dan snaps up --

DAN

Who?

He looks Kirby over. Doesn't recognize her.

CURTIS

For Julia Madrigal.

KIRBY

Nevermind. I'll...

DAN

Bertie send you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Kirby withers under Dan's glare, not sure what the right answer is --

KIRBY

... Yeah.

DAN

Puerile move, poaching a story running on the same press. He should know better.

KIRBY

... Okay.

Kirby has no idea what that was about. She eyes Dan's LEGAL NOTEPAD before scurrying off.

Irritated, Dan turns back to the microfiche.

He slots his eye up to the viewfinder, clicks through a blurry whirl of articles, until he settles on --

The HEADLINE ARTICLE on Julia's disappearance.

*SOCIAL WORKER MISSING FOR 2 DAYS. POLICE SEARCH UNDERWAY.*

Below the blurb...

A candid PHOTO of JULIA MADRIGAL -- early 20s, no makeup, athletic. Not smiling - her gaze straight into camera. Confidant, formidable.

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - RESEARCH LAB - DAY**

CLOSE-ON Jin-Sook typing, spreadsheets scroll down her screen. In the bg, Hartmann finishes up a call.

HARTMANN (INTO PHONE)

-- That's obscene. We're NSF funded, you can't give our time away to jejune undergrads --  
(listens, then)  
Fine. Put me down for then.

He hangs up the phone.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

Tomorrow's the only night we can have the aperture scope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JIN-SOOK

Do you want me to reschedule your flight back from Caltech?

HARTMANN

No, I'll have Eric come in to take the readings.

JIN-SOOK

I can manage on my own. We only have eight cepheids left.

Jin-Sook watches him deliberate, tries to tip the scales--

JIN-SOOK (CONT'D)

I've been working on the algo.

HARTMANN

Have you gotten it to line up yet?

He looms over her monitor, scrolls through her data.

JIN-SOOK

The expansion rate would have to be increasing to make the numbers work.

HARTMANN

Re-chart them from the Hubble base set. Our readings must be off.

JIN-SOOK

Or maybe theirs are.

Hartmann's surprised by her confidence.

HARTMANN

Maybe... Tomorrow night, you handle the measurements.

Jin-Sook beams, about to thank him when --

BEEP -- BEEP -- BEEP. Hartmann checks another MONITOR.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

Christ, 4's down.

JIN-SOOK

The kids must've messed with it.

Jin-Sook hurries out.

**EXT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - ROOF OBSERVATION DECK - DAY**

A stone grey sky. Rows of TELESCOPE PIERS. Basic setups for tourists. The equipment CREAKS in a shifting wind.

Jin-Sook hunches over TELESCOPE FOUR. She checks the aperture, the optical tube... Spots the problem.

She peers through the viewfinder, re-calibrates the focuser with care, not noticing --

The WIND picks up, the other telescopes RATTLE and SWAY. But Jin-Sook keeps focused on the telescope until --

SLAM. She spins around to find that the DOOR swung shut. She rushes over to it, fears the worst...

JIN-SOOK

No, no, no.

She YANKS on the door - it's locked. She BANGS. Suddenly, she stops, noticing something off to the side --

HER OWN RED UMBRELLA propped against the wall.

Wary, she surveys the roof -- there's no one out here.

Confused, she creeps over to her umbrella, picks it up. As she stares down at it --

PLIP. PLIP. PLIP. The patter of RAIN against the roof. She looks up at low slung THUNDERCLOUDS now overhead.

A DOWNPOUR erupts. Sheets of cold rain dump down on her. Jin Sook scrambles, pops open her umbrella.

She stares into the haze of the storm, uneasy.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - BULLPEN - DAY**

From across the bullpen, we observe Dan at his desk, cranking out copy --

We PULL BACK to reveal Kirby, focused on Dan as she drops lunch orders.

He stands, heads for the EDITOR'S OFFICE.

Kirby seizes the opening, sweeps past Dan's desk and nabs his LEGAL NOTEPAD.

**CUT TO:**

**BATHROOM**

Kirby plunks down on the toilet lid, skims through Dan's NOTEPAD, picks out flashes of his scribbling --

Social worker. 1096s. Athletic. 24.

Suspect - Pawel Banik.

Kirby mouths this name... it means nothing to her. Below that, an address --

4032 N Meade Avenue

Confession in 1989. Prior victims.

Kirby focuses on that, understands why the Detective called her in. Pawel's done this before. Keeps skimming.

Concussive hemorrhaging. Uterus, intestines ruptured, partial removal. Abrasions consistent with dragging.

A crude BODY CHART -- a TORSO with various wound locations circled and an INVERTED CROSS running from neck to navel (the same scar we saw on Kirby).

Stunned, Kirby sits back, focuses on the drawing. The similarity lands on her...

This suspect could also be her attacker.

Flush with adrenaline, she flips through the notes, every detail reads as confirmation. Rational or not, an anger builds until it overwhelms her --

She tosses the notepad, slips into her usual routine --

Hair back, earrings off, lipstick off. Keys in pocket, TANTO KNIFE in other pocket. Same as every day, but today she has a destination, a name. Pawel Banik.

She flips open the lock --

**EXT. STREET (PORTAGE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD) - DAY**

Kirby bustles down a deserted block of RAILROAD BUNGALOWS. Most everyone at work or school.

A pack of SHIRTLESS MEN crack beers and tune-up a junker. Kirby edges past them, her steps falter as they mutter in Polish. Head down, she keeps walking until --

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

She's entirely alone on the patchy sidewalk. Scans the numbers on the houses, finds Pawel's (suspect) address --

A face-brick HOME. The white-picket fence rotting, the weeds waist-high.

She creeps up to front window, cups her hands to the glass. But the curtains are drawn, the house quiet.

She fumbles her hand into her pocket, clutches the knife and soldiers up to --

**CUT TO:**

**HOUSE - FRONT PORCH**

Wavering, Kirby rings the doorbell, waits. From inside, heavy BOOTSTEPS lurch for the door. It swings open, revealing --

BABCIA BANIK (70s) in a stained housecoat. Her spindly limbs bruised, veins bulging. She surveys Kirby.

BABCIA

(thick Polish accent)

Who are you?

KIRBY

(rehearsed, chipper)

I'm with the Chicago Sun Times. Is Pawel Banik here?

BABCIA

You come about Julia?

(Kirby nods)

We see you people all day, I can't make more tea.

Babcia retreats into the darkness of the house. Kirby teeters on the doorstep, strains to see inside --

The only light is a flickering ceiling bulb from a distant hallway. Babcia's voice calls out --

BABCIA (O.S.)

Come, come.

KIRBY

(shouts back)

Tell him to come here, we can speak outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BABCIA (O.S.)

You come in.

Kirby bites her lip, keeps hold of her concealed knife.

**INT. PAWEL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Old world. The walls covered with homemade quilts, shelves of trinkets. The room dusty, forgotten.

The floorboards whine as Kirby shuffles in, her eyes wide, darting around the dark space.

She catches sight of the frilly hem of Babcia's housegown disappearing down a hallway --

BABCIA (O.S.)

Pawel here, you go in --

Kirby edges after her, rounds a corner to find --

**HALLWAY**

Babcia right in front of her, sentineled at a CLOSED DOOR. She motions for Kirby to go in.

KIRBY

I don't... I should come back later.

Kirby stutters back but Babcia tugs on her jacket, urges her into the room --

BABCIA

You go in... Pawel.

She motions for Kirby to be quiet, corrals her into --

**BEDROOM**

Kirby slips into the room, dark except a rotating STARSCAPE that swirls across the ceiling. The only noise comes from the STATIC of a TV.

Disoriented, Kirby searches the shadows, unable to make out more than silhouettes --

KIRBY

... Pawel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shhhh. A MAN'S VOICE, closer than she imagined. She whirls around, comes face to face with --

The hulking SILHOUETTE of a man. Kirby's throat dries up, she shuffles back, deeper into the room...

KIRBY

Are you Pawel?

He murmurs in a rheumy whisper --

PAWEL

She likes the sound.

KIRBY

What sound?

PAWEL

(whispers)

The fuzzy sound, the tv, she likes it --

KIRBY

Who? Julia?

Pawel inches closer, clutching something in his arms.

PAWEL

(whispers)

No, I don't hurt her.

Kirby's hand edges out of her jacket with the KNIFE --

KIRBY

I can't see you.

She steps next to the TV, the static shedding enough light to see. Her knuckles white around the knife.

Pawel rushes towards her --

PAWEL

(loud now, agitated)

I told you, I tell everybody, I didn't hurt Julia --

His accent just as thick as Babcia's. He steps into the glow of the TV --

Kirby jerks back, gets a good look at --

PAWEL (30s, one of the mugshots), kind brown eyes, cradling a NEWBORN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Kirby, stunned by the baby, drops the knife. It CLATTERS to the ground.

PAWEL  
(re: clatter)  
What's that?

But Kirby's focused on Pawel.

KIRBY  
Why are you talking like that?

PAWEL  
Like what? Julia was a nice girl --

KIRBY  
(unravels)  
No, I don't know you --

PAWEL  
Shhh. You wake her --

The baby in Pawel's arms starts WAILING.

PAWEL  
(re: crying baby)  
Fuck, no. *Wracaj spac mój slodki.*

Kirby realizes -- the accent, his voice. He wasn't her attacker.

KIRBY  
I shouldn't be here... Sorry, I'm  
sorry...

She trails off, dodges past a confused Pawel.

**EXT. HOUSE - DAY**

Kirby bursts out the front door, running blind into the brightness of day when --

SMACK. She charges straight into a MAN, his hands grip onto her hard... she jerks back, looking up at --

A bewildered Dan.

**INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY**

Tucked in a back booth, Kirby. Her head bowed, her face flush. Still reeling.

Across from her, Dan looks away, giving her space. She slurps the last of a Coke. He pushes his over to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

(re: coke)  
The sugar helps.

She sips more Coke, settles a bit.

DAN (CONT'D)

What happened in that house?

KIRBY

Nothing. He was just putting his kid to bed.

DAN

Who sent you over there?  
(off her silence)  
I talked to Bertie. You're not helping him on the story.

KIRBY

I never said I was. You did.

DAN

If you're trying to get on a desk, this isn't the way to do it.

KIRBY

I already gave my notice. So you can't fire me.

Kirby starts for her backpack, stands to leave --

DAN

You get a better gig?

KIRBY

I don't care where I work. I'm just leaving town.

DAN

Where to?

KIRBY

Orlando.

DAN

What's there? Family? School?  
Suicide pact?

Kirby's thrown by his interest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KIRBY

(shrugs)  
Just a change.

DAN

You'll get that.  
(re: counter)  
Foods up, grab us some napkins.

Before Kirby can agree, Dan heads for the counter.

She deliberates, considers the door... grabs napkins and eases back down.

Dan returns with a tray of food, Kirby picks at fries.

KIRBY

I wasn't trying to take your story.

DAN

So it was personal. You knew Julia?

Kirby shakes her head, focuses on the fries.

DAN (CONT'D)

Who are you scared of?

She perks up, taken aback --

DAN (CONT'D)

Your eyes haven't left that door since we sat down, you flinch any time somebody walks past, and you're holding your keys like they're brass knuckles.

He motions under the booth -- her keys still gripped in her hand.

DAN (CONT'D)

You don't seem like you'd walk into a stranger's house. You know Pawel?

KIRBY

... I thought I did. I'm Sharon Leeds.

She waits for the name to land on Dan. He draws a blank. Flustered, she tries to talk around her past, chatters --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KIRBY (CONT'D)

The Detective who was on my case, he called me in... It doesn't matter, none of this matters. I thought it did. But it doesn't. His accent... he wasn't the same guy.

DAN

(understands)

What someone did to Julia, they tried to do to you?

Kirby locks eyes with him, the only confirmation she can offer. Dan sits back, takes this in.

DAN (CONT'D)

... Now I get why you want a change. But you picked the one city in Florida without a beach.

Kirby cracks a smile. He probes gently --

DAN (CONT'D)

Why'd the Detective think it was the same guy?

She hardens, doesn't want to get emotional.

KIRBY

I was cut up the same as Julia. I saw it in your notes... But I heard him, Pawel. It wasn't him.

DAN

What were you going to do if it was?

Kirby stares back at Dan, not entirely sure.

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - RESEARCH LAB - DAY**

Jin-Sook clacks away at her computer. Hartmann packs up his briefcase.

HARTMANN

You spoke with security about the roof door?

JIN-SOOK

They replaced the lock for us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARTMANN

Call if you run into any issues  
with the readings tomorrow.

JIN-SOOK

Have a safe trip --

Hartmann's already hurrying out... and the room falls quiet. Jin-Sook breaks into her LUNCH.

She listens to FOOTSTEPS and MUFFLED CONVERSATIONS from the hallway. The sounds distant, foreboding.

On edge, she eyes her RED UMBRELLA hung on the rack. She sinks back, feeling very alone in here.

CARL SAGAN (PRE-LAP)

We are now only 2 million light years from home. It's a vast storm of stars and gas and dust. Each cluster orbits the massive center of the galaxy, some contain up to a million separate stars.

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - DAY**

We float across the cloudy swirl of the Milky Way.

CARL SAGAN (V.O.)

But all it takes is one star to influence a world halfway across the galaxy, a billion years into the future.

The galaxy vanishes and we're thrown into DARKNESS.

ANNOUNCER (THROUGH PA)

Please remember to gather all of your personal belongings. And visit the stars again soon.

The HOUSE LIGHTS pop on and we realize we're in the PLANETARIUM AUDITORIUM.

Jin-Sook sits near the front, finishing up her lunch. Her unease forgotten now that she's surrounded by people.

The Crowd dissipates around her, filing out. Except for...

In the deep bg a MAN remains seated. Waiting.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

As the dregs of the Crowd leave, the Man rises, approaches Jin-Sook.

She finishes her lunch, oblivious, as the Man settles into the row behind her.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - BULLPEN - MORNING**

Dan, his notes in disarray, half-watching a mini BOXSET TV propped up on a stack of old newspapers.

ON TV: A POLICE PRESS CONFERENCE. Samuels at the podium.

ABBY (O.S.)  
Shouldn't you be there?

Dan looks up to find Abby (his Editor) staring at his mess of notes. He quickly cleans up his desk --

DAN  
They're just rolling out the victim.

ABBY  
The Tribune ran a blurb. It mentioned a person of interest.

DAN  
They're making an arrest soon. But their case isn't all there yet.

ABBY  
Bertie said PD feel confident.

DAN  
When did we start equating confidence with credibility.

Dan turns back to his notes.

ABBY  
You raised your hand for this. So if you're heading in another direction, make sure you're going somewhere.

He sits up, taken aback by her tone --

DAN  
... I'm only waiting to move some sources off background.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABBEY

File it tomorrow and walk us  
through it at the A1.

She leaves him to it. Frustrated, Dan cranks up the  
volume on the TV. We follow his gaze to --

**ON TV:** The POLICE PRESS CONFERENCE. Detective Samuels at  
a podium, facing a firing squad of top-tier REPORTERS --

REPORTER

When do you do expect the medical  
examiner's report?

SAMUELS

We're not releasing that. But  
Julia's father would like to say a  
few words.

Samuels motions for RICHARD MADRIGAL (60s, Julia's  
father) to step forward.

As the grieving Richard shuffles up to the mic, Samuels  
places a hand on his shoulder.

Richard Madrigal snaps away, shrugs Samuels off.

Troubled, Dan sits back. He knows something isn't right.

#### **FLOATER SECTION**

Dan thumps his hands down on Kirby's desk, she snaps up  
from proofing copy.

DAN

Let's go for a walk.

#### **EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - DAY**

A rare, sunny day. Dan marches Kirby through the lunch-  
hour crush on the MICHIGAN AVENUE BRIDGE. We get the  
sense they've been chatting for a few blocks --

KIRBY

... Wicker Park's nothing like the  
way you guys cover it.

DAN

You guys? You work there too, say  
something about it. You have a  
boyfriend, girlfriend, roommate?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KIRBY

You ask a lot of questions.

DAN

Back in the 60s, there was this botanist, off in Hawaii. All these flower power windbags thought they'd found everything there was on those islands. But this guy comes around and picks out a thousand new species. How'd he do it - he got lost. To find what everyone else missed, you have to give up the path.

KIRBY

Sounds like a good way to die in a jungle. What's your point?

DAN

I try not to have one.

KIRBY

Fine, I live with my mom.

DAN

I moved back home once too. And I had about 10 years on you. You'll figure it out. How long's it been?

KIRBY

A couple of years. And she moved in with me.

DAN

After your attack?

KIRBY

After she went broke.

They reach the opposite bank of the Chicago River.

DAN

What does she think about what happened to you?

KIRBY

She doesn't.

DAN

Well I've been thinking about it. I talked to Iris, the Medical Examiner working Julia's case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Kirby realizes Dan has stopped outside a squat MUNICIPAL BUILDING, the sign reads -- OFFICE OF MEDICAL EXAMINER.

DAN (CONT'D)

She wanted to ask you some questions.

KIRBY

What for?

DAN

Her report suggests Julia's attacker was a repeat offender.

Curious, Kirby understands his implication.

DAN (CONT'D)

You said Pawel wasn't your guy, maybe let her confirm it.

Off Kirby's hesitation.

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - DAY**

As Jin-Sook gathers the remnants of her lunch to leave, the Man waiting behind her eases forward...

MAN

Better like this, isn't it?

Startled, she whips around to --

**HARPER.** The man from the opening. All these years later, he looks exactly the same, down to his field jacket.

JIN-SOOK

Excuse me?

HARPER

The lights up there, they hurt my eyes.

JIN-SOOK

Oh, yeah, the show can get bright.

HARPER

I'd sit through it twice to talk to you.

Jin-Sook offers a polite smile, he's somewhat attractive in a hangdog kind of way. He leans up on his elbows, leans over her seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER (CONT'D)

Night sky's too grim for me  
anyway. Every star you see is  
dead. The brightest ones, the ones  
you wish to, that's them exploding  
in on themselves. The bad news  
just takes awhile to reach us.

JIN-SOOK

That's only true for the most  
distant stars. The ones in our  
galaxy live on, long past us.

HARPER

(sours)

That's not how I heard it.

JIN-SOOK

It's a common misconception.

She notices his frustration at being corrected, it's off-  
putting. She starts for the aisle --

JIN-SOOK (CONT'D)

You should try the three o'clock  
lunar display. It's nice and dark.

HARPER

I'll be sure to do that, Jin-Sook.

She freezes at hearing her own name. Harper smiles,  
blocks her way out.

HARPER (CONT'D)

I figured I'd give you a minute.  
But you still don't recognize me?

JIN-SOOK

Have you been on one of my tours?

Her bravado falters, she glances around. It's just the  
two of them in the cavernous auditorium.

HARPER (CONT'D)

... Sometimes you know me,  
sometimes you don't. I can never  
puzzle out why.

JIN-SOOK

(hardens)

I don't know you.

Harper keeps his mood lighthearted, familiar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Not today, I guess not.

He studies her -- her hands trembling, the bounding pulse in her neck.

HARPER (CONT'D)

Don't be nervous. I'm just here for the lights.

Harper eases back on his heels and leaves, abandoning a shaken Jin-Sook in his wake.

**INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

A gloomy, bead-boarded LOBBY. The RECEPTIONIST smokes out the window, looks up to see --

Dan bustles in, Kirby trailing behind him.

DAN

(to Receptionist)  
What's cooking, Annie?

The Receptionist (Annie) beams at Dan, a familiar face.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey hun, she's waiting on you.

DAN

(to Kirby)  
Grab a seat.

Kirby settles onto a folding chair, notices a wall of faded MEDICAL EXAMINERS' PHOTOS and their framed CERTIFICATES. She peeks down the hall as --

Dan hugs **IRIS LASKARIS** (60s, Medical Examiner) - a tiny woman with a big, cheerful presence. They catch up.

Kirby strains to hear their conversation, she picks out her name. Dan catches her eavesdropping, waves her over.

**INT. EXAM SUITE - DAY**

A stuffy basement room. Kirby fidgets, seated on a wobbly stool. She takes in the space --

Stacks of BANKERS BOXES, shelves of FORENSIC TEXTBOOKS. Her focus lingers on the MORTUARY COLD CHAMBERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IRIS  
(re: cold chambers)  
Don't worry, they can't get out.

Kirby's too on edge to fake a smile.

Iris takes a seat across from her, offering a bowl of M&Ms. Kirby feels obligated, takes a handful.

KIRBY  
Thank you.

IRIS  
First time Dan came here, I  
couldn't get him past the door.

DAN  
She wasn't handing out candy back  
then.

KIRBY  
(lies)  
I'm fine.

Iris reaches for her notebook and pen.

IRIS  
(re: notebook)  
I forget everything. From the  
formaldehyde. Now they say we have  
to wear masks, but after forty  
years what does it matter.

She smiles, scooches closer to Kirby.

IRIS (CONT'D)  
You were assaulted, yes?

KIRBY  
(caught off guard)  
Yeah... aggravated assault. He had  
a knife.

IRIS  
(jots notes)  
They identified the instrument?

KIRBY  
No. But the handle was wood. They  
found some under my nails.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

IRIS

The incisions on Julia were distinct, practiced. Is there scar tissue from your wounds?

KIRBY

(nods)  
Across my stomach.

IRIS

Lateral? Medial?  
(Kirby's confused)  
Up and down or side to side.

KIRBY

Both.

IRIS

How thick is the scarring?

KIRBY

About an inch, maybe half an inch.

IRIS

The size of my eraser or my fingernail?

Kirby eyes the eraser, then Iris' fingernail.

KIRBY

... I don't know.

IRIS (CONT'D)

(re: scars)  
Could I see them?

Kirby shrinks back, wary.

DAN

I'll step out.

Before Kirby can consent, Dan slips out of the room, leaving the Women on their own.

Kirby realizes this is an ambush, tightens --

KIRBY

I told you what the scars look like.

IRIS (CONT'D)

The distinction of half an inch is relevant.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

IRIS (CONT'D)

It tells me about the blade, your positioning, his mindset.

KIRBY

I went through all this when it happened. Just find the file.

IRIS

There are forensic similarities between you and Julia. Striking ones. If you want to know if your lacerations are identical I can tell you, but I need to examine them.

Kirby braces herself and relents, unbuttons her shirt. She fans it open, exposing her scarred stomach.

Iris squints, leaning forward. But it's hard to make out much. Exasperated, she stands, motions to the EXAMINATION TABLE, a slab of aluminum.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Over here, the light's better.

KIRBY

On the table?

Iris is already throwing a fresh sheet over the slab.

IRIS

(re: sheets)

Hop on up, they're still warm from the dryer.

Uncomfortable, Kirby clamors onto the table. She tucks her feet away from the FLUID DRAINS and FAUCETS.

Iris lowers her surgical glasses, swings a glaring OVERHEAD LIGHT above Kirby --

Kirby peers into the blinding light as Iris examines her.

IRIS

He started on the anterior ventral. You were on the ground?

KIRBY

He came up behind me, threw me down. I was on my back.

Iris' gloved finger prods at the keloid SCARS, her breath prickles the soft hair on Kirby's stomach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

IRIS

There's a stutter here, he was interrupted?

KIRBY

Somebody walked past.

IRIS

You couldn't call to them?

KIRBY

There was stuff in my mouth, a tennis ball. I was walking my dog, he shoved it in. Took out my front teeth.

Kirby, overwhelmed, closes her eyes.

IRIS

There was tearing. Was anything removed from your abdominal cavity?

KIRBY

Some of my intestines, my uterus. I didn't remember it, but the doctor told me after.

IRIS

Did he leave something inside you?

Kirby, suddenly curious, opens her eyes. But she still can't see past the bright overhead light.

KIRBY

... A lighter. It was old, an antique... How'd you know that?

No answer from Iris.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Was there something inside Julia?

A long silence... Iris' silhouette still hunched over her. Kirby props herself up, eager for an answer --

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Did you find something in her?

She straightens to find --

A MAN in a surgical mask hovers over her, his stubby fingers reaching out for her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Kirby panics, kicks him away, fumbling off the table --

KIRBY	MAN
WHO ARE YOU? GET THE FUCK OFF ME, DON'T TOUCH ME.	Woah, relax --

Dan charges back into the room, spots Kirby throwing on her shirt --

DAN	KIRBY
Sorry, I thought you were done --	(gets dressed) WHERE'S IRIS? (re: Man) GET HIM OUT OF HERE.

The Man steps away from Kirby, hands raised, baffled.

MAN  
I don't know what happened, we  
were almost done.

Dan approaches Kirby, tries to calm her. But she's frenzied, manic --

KIRBY  
Who the fuck is he? Why's he in  
here?

Dan steps between Kirby and the Man. He talks slow and steady, well practiced at calming hysterics --

DAN  
This is Howard Kantz. The Medical  
Examiner. You said it was okay for  
him to examine you.

Kirby looks between Dan and the Man (Howard Kantz), trying to understand...

DAN (CONT'D)  
Who's Iris? Is she someone  
connected to your attack?

Kirby surveys the room - the M&Ms replaced by a photo of Howard and his young Wife.

It hits Kirby. Iris has become Howard. This is like her desk, a shift in her reality that she can't explain.

DAN  
Kirby, you okay?

Overwhelmed, she explodes --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

KIRBY  
WHY THE FUCK DID YOU BRING ME  
HERE?

Kirby charges past him, running out. Dan turns to the still puzzled Howard --

DAN  
(to Howard)  
What happened?

Howard shakes his head, he has no idea.

**INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER OFFICE - LOBBY - DAY**

Kirby careens down the hall, her hair wild, her shirt unevenly buttoned. She stops at the wall of MEDICAL EXAMINERS' PHOTOS --

Iris' photo replaced by a chipper HEADSHOT of HOWARD KATZ. The image faded, it's been up there for years.

A shaky Kirby sits with that reality. Totally at a loss to understand it.

**INT. DAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A bachelor's kitchen. Dan makes a mess as he cooks mac n' cheese from a box, doctors it with sausage. He lurches between the stove and the fridge, almost nervous...

DAN  
Grab some bowls.

Dan snaps to get the attention of his son -- **FREDDIE VELAZQUEZ** (12) awkward, sweet. The maypole of Dan's life.

Freddie checks the cupboards, they're pretty bare.

FREDDIE  
(whispers, re: bowls)  
They're not here.

DAN  
(whispers)  
In the sink, give them a rinse.

Freddie washes some bowls as Dan turns to --

**GLORIA ALFRED** (50s, Caribbean) a social worker, observing them from the kitchen table. Pen and pad always at hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)  
Miss Gloria, you want ketchup,  
Tabasco, anything on yours?

Gloria holds up a tupperware --

GLORIA  
I brought my own supper.

DAN  
You sure? I make a passable Mac 'n  
Cheese.

GLORIA  
I'm a billy goat with the carbs,  
but I'm on the Atkins for now,  
thank you.

FREDDIE  
(to Dan)  
Game's about to start.

Dan serves up a couple bowls, turns to Gloria --

DAN  
Is it okay if we eat in front of  
the TV?

GLORIA  
This is your home, Mr. Velazquez.

DAN  
Right.

He leads Freddie out to --

**INT. DAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Dan and Freddie settle on the futon. The TV already on,  
tuned to the LOCAL NEWS --

ON TV: Detective Samuels leads a cuffed Pawel Banik out  
of his house.

TV REPORTER (ON TV)  
Mr. Banik's arrest comes on the  
heels of reports that police found  
a possible murder weapon in his  
home...

Dan side-eyes Gloria, who settles into a corner chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDDIE

Dad, come on, Channel 9.

Dan changes the channel to -- a Bulls PLAYOFF GAME, Michael Jordan's heyday.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(re: Bulls game)

You think we can sweep them?

DAN

Yeah, maybe. Go grab us some pops, bud.

FREDDIE

At the commercial.

DAN

Go on. And one for Ms. Gloria.

Freddie huffs to his feet, leaves Dan alone with Gloria.

DAN

You don't have to wait here, I can run him to his mom's after.

GLORIA

You know I can't do that Mr. Velazquez. How's it going at work? You finding a new rhythm?

DAN

Staying away from old habits if that's what you mean.

GLORIA

Good. A stable income is a stable home.

He bristles at her condescension, but offers up a smile.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

You go to church, Mr. Velazquez?

DAN

Sitting still was never my strength.

GLORIA

A crisis of the spirit can't be cured with Canaanite's balms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

I was never after the cure, Miss  
Gloria. I was chasing the crisis.

Freddie charges back in with Cokes. Dan clocks Gloria making a note in her pad. He swallows his pride --

DAN (CONT'D)

But if there's any local parishes  
you recommend...

Gloria ignores Dan, smiles at Freddie who hands her a soda. He jumps back on the futon, focusing on the game.

But Dan picks at his food, one eye always on Gloria. Patti Smith's '*Pissing in a River*' carries us to --

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Kirby slumps home, keys out. The PATTI SMITH SONG blasts from inside her apartment. Her MOTHER'S VOICE wailing over the vocals. She's actually pretty good.

But this is the last thing Kirby wants to deal with --

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Kirby finds -- her Mom rough-housing with their Pitbull (Grendel) and chugging Thunderbird.

She steps past Rachel, hurrying towards her bedroom.

KIRBY

(re: music)  
Janet'll call the super again.

Rachel shrugs her off. Kirby notices a Salvation Army SHOPPING BAG parked in front of her bedroom door --

KIRBY

(re: bag)  
What's this?

Kirby pulls some floral porcelain PLATES from the bag.

RACHEL

They're the only ones I could find  
in a complete set. You need extra  
for when you have people over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kirby turns the plates over, tearing up. The weight of the day catching up to her.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
(notices, concerned)  
You okay, baby? They're just some shitty plates.

KIRBY  
It's not that.

RACHEL  
Is it the move? You don't have to go if you don't want to.

Kirby quiet, still upset.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
What happened? Something go down at work?

KIRBY (CONT'D)  
(struggles)  
... After what he did to me... things aren't how I know they should be.

RACHEL  
What do you mean?

KIRBY  
They change, they're not how I left them. Then they become something else... something I don't know.

This is news to Rachel. She doesn't fully understand --

RACHEL  
You're working through it.

KIRBY  
It's getting worse.

RACHEL  
Is that why you're leaving?

Kirby shrugs.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
... Remember that prick, Jason?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

KIRBY

Aunt Darlene's first husband?

RACHEL

She gave him three boys. He thanked Darlene by running out on her one morning. We found him 12 years later, living on a commune in Oregon. He went to find peace and quiet, ended up on a dirt farm with another five kids.

KIRBY

And?

RACHEL

And he should've just bought earplugs. He didn't have to disappear across the country to do it. Just make sure you're getting something different.

Kirby sips the Thunderbird, considers her packed boxes.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - BULLPEN - DAY**

We follow the clock on the wall - tick, tick, tick -- counting down to the daily A1 meeting.

A few JOURNALISTS shuffle for the CONFERENCE ROOM. Dan jams away at his computer, wrapping up his ARTICLE.

KIRBY (O.S.)

Put me on your desk.

Dan realizes Kirby is standing over him, keeps typing.

DAN

I thought you gave your notice.

KIRBY

(motions to article)  
You're off. You know it wasn't Pawel.

DAN

This is what I have. And it's already late. I won't miss my deadline.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KIRBY (CONT'D)

I know what happened to me, it's what happened to Julia.

(re: article)

And that's not it. Did you talk to... Howard?

DAN

Yeah, you scared the shit out of him.

KIRBY

I'll go back, I'll talk to him, to the Detectives, whatever you need. But please don't get it wrong.

Bertie swings past his desk --

BERTIE

You joining us, Dan?

DEPARTMENT EDITORS herd towards the Conference Room. Dan considers his article, all ready to go.

**INT. CHICAGO SUN TIMES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

The A1 meeting in full swing. The EDITORS crowded around the table, pitching their stories to Abby.

METRO EDITOR

... Daley's office is saying Edgar guaranteed federal funds. Once Springfield hears they're giving police escorts to cement trucks, forget it. The overtime alone'll shut down 10 schools.

ABBY

Flush out some quotes. Try Dorchester at City Hall.

(turns to Dan)

You were supposed to file on Julia Madrigal this morning.

Dan deliberates, pen tapping against his notepad. Abby know his silence isn't a good sign.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Do your worst.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

... I'm pursuing an alternate suspect, a possible serial offender.

Bertie groans --

ABBY

(to Dan)

What do you have to support this --

BERTIE

It's pure provocation, kick the hive reporting. And for what? We'll be lucky to get a heads up on a parking ticket from now on.

ABBY

I heard you, Bertie.

(back to Dan)

Where's this coming from?

DAN

A source, a credible one.

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT BUILDNG - NIGHT**

Kirby. She bustles down the hallway, keys out, as she climbs up the STAIRWELL --

**INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - BASEMENT - NIGHT**

-- BOOTS edge up a STAIRCASE. Red security FLOOD LIGHTS guiding the way. We PULL UP from the BOOTS to reveal Harper. He stops at an open ARCHWAY leading to the --

CENTRAL ATRIUM. The SECURITY GUARD (Sheila) at her post.

Harper keeps tucked against the wall, hidden from the Guard's line of sight.

The Guard pulls a SODA from a brown bag. Harper can't see her, but he listens... as soon as she POPS open the can --

Harper starts COUNTING, anticipating. He mouths... one, two, three, four... twelve and --

In a flash, he rounds the corner, in plain sight of the Guard...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But just as he appears the Guard's soda slips from her hand, spilling onto the ground...

As she bends to wipe it, Harper glides past her. His timing precise, perfect. A synchronized dance that only he knew to rehearse.

He stalks unseen through the otherwise empty lobby. By the time the Guard straightens, Harper's gone.

#### **DOANE OBSERVATORY**

A rotunda, at the center of the room - a towering APERTURE TELESCOPE that points out the OPEN DOMED CEILING. The starscape shimmers overhead.

Harper strides in, heads for the WALL opposite the door. Bends down, runs his thumb along the ground, feeling for a worn ETCHING in the wood flooring.

Harper straightens, stands with his boots lined up with that etching, like it was his mark.

#### **INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Kirby stands at her FRONT DOOR'S threshold, tries her KEY -- but it sticks in the lock, won't turn. Strange.

#### **INT. ALDER PLANETARIUM - DOANE OBSERVATORY NIGHT**

Harper keeps stock-still as FOOTSTEPS charge up the staircase...

Jin-Sook bustles in, flicks on the lights, the electrical hum echoes in the cavernous space. But one bulb is dead.

Cautious, she scans the space, but Harper remains perfectly hidden in the shadow cast by the dead bulb.

Rushed, she locks the door, throws KEYS into her purse. Working fast, Jin-Sook sets up at the APERTURE TELESCOPE, adjusts the knobs, readies her notebook.

Harper's breathing grows staccato, his imposing silhouette shifts in anticipation...

Jin-Sook bends over the telescope, settles her eye into the viewfinder...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All at once, Harper CHARGES from the shadows, a blur rushing at Jin Sook --

He buries a KNUCKLE DUSTER KNIFE into her sacrum. Jin-Sook jerks back. Clutching the telescope, she spins --

-- slugs Harper with the telescope, a CRACK as it connects with his KNEE. He crumples to the ground --

In a rage of confused panic, she scrambles for the door, jerks to rip it open, but it's locked.

She looks back at her purse... all the way across the room. Harper on the ground beside it.

Her mouth twists to scream, but only spittle coughs out. The KNIFE still wedged in her back, weeping blood.

Harper staggers to his feet. Cornered, Jin-Sook, squeezes against the locked door, as Harper limps towards her.

With a heavy grip, he drags her down again. Squats on top of her, she still squirms. Their breaths syncopated - his wheezing, her rabbit inhalations as we drift away...

... past the growing pool of blood... past the broken telescope... landing at --

Jin-Sook's PURSE. Harper's bloody HAND suddenly appears, roots through it. He fishes out her keys. Pauses, noticing something else -- the PEGASUS. He pockets it.

Harper limps off. The night sky a blur above him. His boots CLACK in the empty chamber... BANG -- BANG -- BANG--

**INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

-- BANG -- BANG -- BANG. Kirby KNOCKS at her front door.

KIRBY  
MOM, LET ME IN.

From inside her apartment, FOOTSTEPS bound for the door. It swings open, revealing --

A NEIGHBOR (M, 40s) in sweatpants, irritated at the interruption. A total stranger to Kirby.

KIRBY  
... Where's Rachel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEIGHBOR

Wrong apartment.

He goes to close the door, she kicks it back open again.

KIRBY

This is 301.

NEIGHBOR

(angry, points)

Yeah, number's right there.

Kirby checks the apartment number, clear as can be - 301.

She peeks past him into *her* apartment -- the furniture is entirely different, no sign of her mom.

He slams the door on her. Kirby reels back, her throat tightens, her hands tremble, fearing what's coming --

She pulls out her DRIVER'S LICENSE. Her photo and name are the same...

But her ADDRESS has changed. It's the same building but the apartment number now reads #208.

With sinking dread, Kirby marches down the stairwell to --

## 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY

Kirby sinks her key into the lock of apartment 208, the door easily creaks open... She peeks into --

## INT. KIRBY'S APARTMENT (NEW APARTMENT) - NIGHT

A worn welcome mat, cluttered bookshelf, refurbished coffee table. Everything considered, inviting. A home. But all of it foreign to Kirby. She edges in, wary.

KIRBY

Rachel...? Mom...?

No answer. As she inspects the space, her CAT (Grendel - from morning) darts over. She bends down to greet him.

KIRBY

(whispers to Cat)

At least you're here.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Who's here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kirby startles, spins around to face --

Curtis (from newspaper) steps out of the bedroom. In his boxers, fresh from the shower.

CURTIS

You pick up Moon Palace?

Kirby can only stare back at him, thunderstruck.

KIRBY

... Curtis?

CURTIS

Babe, where's the food? We don't have anything in the fridge.

He notices her mood, pulls her close.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

You alright?

On Kirby, confronted with a new boyfriend, a new home, an entirely new reality.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

What's wrong? What happened?

KIRBY

... Nothing. I just came home.

**END OF EPISODE.**